# Boethius on Modality and Future Contingents

1 author:

Jonathan Evans
University of Indianapolis
**5** PUBLICATIONS **10** CITATIONS

SEE PROFILE

# Boethius on Modality and Future Contingents

Jonathan Evans (University of Indianapolis)

Boethius addressed two main problems posed by the problem of future contingents which shed important light on his conception of necessity and possibility; a logical problem that alleges that if propositions about the future are true now then they are necessarily true, and a theological problem the centers on a supposed incompatibility between divine foreknowledge and a contingent future. Traditionally commentators have pointed to Boethius's two *Commentaries* on *De Interpretatione* as the source of his solution to the logical problem, while placing his considered solution to the theological problem in his *Consolation of Philosophy*.[1]

While the solution to the logical problem in the *Commentaries* has justly attracted interest, there are questions about the authenticity of the solution as Boethius' own and concomitantly worries that the modal claims made there are one's Boethius himself may not endorse.[2] Rather than resolving a thorny philological question to establish a synoptic view of Boethian modalities, this paper will forgo a discussion of the *Commentaries* texts and aim at the more modest task of uncovering Boethius' understanding of modality in the *Consolation*. To accomplish this goal I will examine Boethius' characterization of the logical and theological problems of future contingents in the *Consolation* text – since it is the discussion of those problems where Boethius provides us with our best evidence about how to understand claims containing modal operators – and in the course of doing so, defend my interpretation against rival accounts.

## *Boethius and the Logical Problem of Future Contingents*

The logical problem of future contingents, which is first discussed in Aristotle's *De Interpretatione* 9, concerns the implications true propositions about the future have for human free-will. The problem centers on the fatalist's claim that if some future proposition is true now, then the

proposition, and hence the event or state of affairs it describes, is necessary. The reasoning underlying the fatalist's claim works as follows:

1. If a future contingent proposition p is true now, then p is true prior to the occurrence of the event e that p describes.
2. If p is true prior to e's occurrence, then e could not but come about.
3. If e could not but come about, then the proposition, p, that describes it is true of necessity.
4. Therefore, if a future contingent proposition p is true now, then p is true of necessity

Once 4 is established the fatalist concludes that humans fail to possess free-will, assuming that free-will is dependent on future events being contingent. As stated, the argument can be interpreted in several different ways, and because of the flexibility (or ambiguity) of how the fatalist's argument is presented it comes as no surprise that there are several suggestions about how we should interpret Boethius or anyone else as responding to the logical problem in the *Consolation.*

The range of interpretations on how to interpret Boethius's solution in the *Consolation* is based on how commentators interpret the necessity operator in Boethius's discussion. The interpretations fall into two broad categories: interpretations based on some temporalized notion of necessity and interpretations based on an atemporalized notion. As I will argue, I think there are telling reasons for thinking that Boethius holds an atemporal view on modality, which would mark Boethius as unique among medieval philosophers who are often construed as thinking of modality in temporal terms.[3]

Boethius's answer to the logical problem is to disambiguate the scope of the necessity operator used in a crucial inference the fatalist makes in her argument, i.e. the claim that if p is true now then p is true of necessity.[4] This allows Boethius to thrust the fatalist into a dilemma. For given either of the two plausible interpretations about the scope of the necessity operator in the inference, Boethius can show that the argument is unsound. The two interpretations available to the fatalist are as follows:

[A] P1. If some future proposition p is true, then *necessarily* p.

2

P2. p is true.

C. Therefore, *necessarily* p.

[B] P1'. *Necessarily* (if some future proposition p is true, then p).

P2'. p is true.

C'. Therefore, *necessarily* p.

[A] is problematic given its first premise P1 because the necessity involved in P1 is necessity *simpliciter*. On this interpretation, the scope of the modal operator 'necessarily' ranges over the consequent of the conditional only. But the fact that some future proposition is actually true entails nothing about its truth in other possible worlds or hypothetical cases unless, of course, the proposition itself is modal, so [A] is unsound.

Option [B] may be initially preferable to [A] since each of its premises is unproblematic. Assuming that p is true, for the sake of argument, and considering that P1' is a tautology, it is clear that both P1' and P2' are true. Of course, an obvious problem with this argument still remains, i.e. it is invalid.

To illustrate why [B] is invalid, Boethius offers the example of observing a charioteer.

> But how could it be that those things should not happen which are foreseen to be future? Just as if we were to believe that those things which providence foreknows will happen were not going to happen, and did not rather think that although they do happen, yet they have of their nature no necessity that they must happen. Which you may easily gather from this: for many things, while they are happening, we look at set out before our eyes, as for example those things which charioteers are watched doing in guiding and turning their teams, and other things of a similar kind. Now surely no necessity compels any of these things to happen as it does? Not at all; for the exercise of skill would be useless if all things moved under compulsion. Therefore things which, while they are happening, lack any necessity of being so, these same things, before they happen, are future without any necessity. (V. pr. 4.41-56)

Here Boethius seems to be claiming that it is necessary that if I observe veridically that a charioteer is racing past me then the charioteer is, in fact, racing past me; the sentence is necessary because it is a tautologous truth. But from this premise and the assumption that I veridically observe that a charioteer is racing past me it in no way follows that the charioteer's racing past me is a *necessary* event. The charioteer could have taken an entirely different route. So, [B] is invalid. But if [B] is

invalid and [A] is unsound then regardless of which option the fatalist chooses, her argument fails. Boethius's strategy then is to disambiguate the scope of the necessity operator in the fatalist's argument and then show that once this is accomplished the fatalist argument is unconvincing. As we will see in the second section, the result produced by Boethius's solution to the logical problem, will be reapplied to the solution to the theological problem.

But, as I have said, this reading is quite controversial. For one thing, the plausibility of this interpretation depends on attributing to Boethius an atemporal notion of necessity, and it is not clear what that notion amounts to in Boethius. Second, even if we were to come up with an account of the necessities at work in the argument there remains the question of whether the kind of necessity on offer is one Boethius had in mind. Finally, it appears that there are accounts of temporal modalities that can answer these questions already, and that these answers fit nicely into what some commentators believes is the history of the development of modal logic in the medieval period (in the Latin West). What I propose to do now is to show that while the competing alternatives to my view offer relatively clear conceptions of necessity and possibility, these alternatives are inconsistent with the text of the *Consolation.* So that even if we are not in a position to offer a completely clear account of the atemporal modalities I claim are in the *Consolation*, we have reason to believe that some atemporal account is the right one.

### *Knuuttila's Statistical Interpretation of Boethian Modalities*

The first competing interpretation has its origins in Simo Knuuttila's discussion of Boethian modalities.[5] On this alternative Boethius's discussion of the fatalist's argument should be represented as follows:

1. If some temporally-indexed proposition *p at t* is true, then *necessarily* (*p at t*) is true.
2. *p at t* is true.
3. Therefore, *necessary* (*p at t*) is true.

The moral of the modal theory is that truth at time implies necessity at that time. For example, if it is true that Hilary visits Chappaqua at 2pm on July 2, 2006, it is necessary that Hilary visits

Chappaqua at 2pm on July 2, 2006. What enables us to claim that the truth of this proposition entails its necessity is that, if true, this proposition will be true at all times, since the proposition's truth-value cannot be changed once settled. And on Knuuttila's conception of necessity something is necessary just in case it is true at all times. So the proposition about Hilary's visit to Chappaqua is necessary since it is *omnitemporally true* – a thesis which motivates these theorists to call this interpretative option the statistical interpretation of modality.

On the face of things, Knuuttila's statistical interpretation does not look promising as the modal theory it offers is quite implausible. The fact that a proposition is true at all times is not sufficient to claim that the proposition is necessary, because we can imagine cases where propositions are omnitemporally true because of some accident or contingency. However, admitting that the modal theory on offer is implausible is not sufficient in itself to disprove the interpretation. While the principle of charity requires us to select the most plausible interpretation we can, it does not determine what the proper choice is. It may just be the case that Boethius held an implausible modal theory and that proper exercise of the principle of charity cannot change this fact. If so, then Knuuttila can rest assured in his interpretation.

But can he? One initial difficulty of Knuuttila's interpretation is seeing how Boethius could provide a solution to the problem posed in the fatalist's argument given the *Consolation* texts. For regardless of what interpretation one picks, Boethius's solution will involve some appeal to the notion of conditional necessity, either in the form in which I have presented it, as part of a scope distinction strategy, or in some other form. So what Knuuttila owes us, to bolster his case, is a way of making sense of conditional necessity and Boethius's use of it in solving the fatalist's worry. As it turns out Knuuttila believes he can meet the challenge of showing how Boethius saves contingency through the device of conditional necessity given his interpretation of necessity and possibility.

Knuuttila claims that the Boethian strategy in resolving the logical problem involves distinguishing between statement making utterance types. Once the distinction is made we can

show that for the problematic utterances expressing necessary statements there are corresponding

utterances of a different type that can be used to maintain contingency, since those utterances

express contingent statements.  To carry out his solution, Knuuttila distinguishes between

temporally definite and temporally indefinite sentences or utterance types.  When examining

Boethius's text about the charioteer, Knuuttila will claim that conditional necessity is expressed

using a temporally definite sentence:

> If a charioteer is racing past me at 12pm on July 14, 2004 then it is necessary that
> a charioteer is racing past me at 12pm on July 14, 2004.

The sentence, according to Knuuttila represents events at a time as being invariant.[6]  That is, it

will not turn out that the utterance 'A charioteer is racing past me at 12pm on July 14, 2004' has

any other value than true assuming the antecedent of the above conditional is satisfied.  Now this

might not seem to be a very drastic admission, since truth-invariability need not be associated

with necessity; after all, one could claim that although a temporally definite statement s is truth-

invariable s could have had a different truth value.  In other words it seems that even though the

truth of a statement about some event settles the matter in our actual history it need not have

happened so long as things had been different.  Knuuttila claims, however, that this notion of

possibility, the notion of two-sided possibility, or as he calls it the notion of "simultaneous

synchronic alternatives" is not open to Boethius, (i.e the notion that possibly p at t and possibility

~p at t.)  Rather Knuuttila believes that Boethius understands possibility by the following:

(P)  If p is possible then p was true or p is true or p will be true.

Since Knuuttila means for 'p' to stand for temporally definite sentences, once relativized to a

time, (P) entails the following:

(P') If p is possible at t then p is true at t.

We formulate (P') this way, that is dropping the 'p was true' and the 'or p will be true' since p is

true at t, p was true at t and p will be true at t amount to the same thing.[7]  But since (P) is

incompatible with two-sided possibility, it follows that (P') entails:

If p is possible at t then p is necessary at t.

since the denial of two-sided possibility amounts to:

If p is true at t then p is necessary at t.

The result is that truth-invariability is equivalent to necessity, and since temporally definite statements are truth-invariable it follows that they are necessary. It is at this point that Knuuttila employs his strategy, borrowed from Jaakko Hintikka, to show how Boethius (confusedly) attempted to preserve contingency.[8] On this interpretation, Boethius thinks that corresponding to a temporally definite statement (or more properly a temporally definite statement making utterance type) like:

(*) A charioteer is racing past me at 12pm on July 12, 2004

is the temporally indefinite statement

(**) A charioteer is racing past me now

so long as there is a context of utterance where token instances of each type converge, i.e. they would both provide a correct description of the event in question. Although the utterance type (*) is truth-invariant, since all tokens of (*) share the same truth-value, (**) is not truth-invariant since tokens of (**) will sometimes be true and at other times will be false. But since (**) corresponds to (*), as tokens of each utterance type converge at 12pm on July 12, 2004 we can substitute (**) for (*) to retain the contingency of the present and the future, so long as our notion of contingency depends on the account of possibility in (P); a model of possibility that is diachronic in nature. In the case of conditionally necessary propositions Knuuttila claims that Boethius uses sentences like

(1) If it is true that a charioteer races past me at 12pm on July 12, 2004, then it is necessary that a charioteer races past me at 12pm on July 12, 2004,

to show that there is a relative sense in which propositions about the present and future are necessary; that is, relative to some time the proposition in question is necessary. However, when the condition is removed, that is when we drop the antecedent from the picture so as to view the

occurrence of events without indexing them to some particular time (thus freeing the consequent from being temporally definite), we are free to reinterpret what is expressed in the consequent by using a temporally indefinite sentence such as:

(2) A charioteer is racing past me now.

What this demonstrates is that we can represent the occurrence of events with statements in either of two ways: indexed to a particular time, or free from such indexing. In so doing we can supposedly save the world from fatalism by showing that temporally indefinite utterance types are contingent, since their tokens are sometimes true but other times false.[9]

Knuuttilla's interpretation is not all bad. First, he recognizes that if this is indeed Boethius's attempt to block fatalism, that attempt does not fly. Not only is the technique of substituting temporally definite utterance types for temporally indefinite ones suspect, but the strategy has the result of giving up contingency for event tokens. Surely, this is an unsatisfactory result so long as our interest is whether particular events, ones which we are supposed to freely influence, are contingent.

Second, Knuuttila is correct to ascribe the view to Boethius that if some utterance token u or temporally definite sentence s is true and u or s is necessary on either sense of necessity (i.e. conditional or *simpliciter*), then u or s is omnitemporally true. In other words utterance tokens and temporally definite sentences are both truth invariable if either kind of necessity attends to them.[10] However, this connection by itself is less than what Knuuttila wants from necessity, for it is also the case, on his view, that p is necessary if p is omnitemporally true. The problem with Knuuttila's interpretation of Boethian necessity, and conditional necessity in particular, is extending the definition of necessity to cover this additional requirement.[11]

There is little evidence in the *Consolation* for believing that Boethius holds the statistical interpretation of possibility as expressed in (P). In fact, the evidence Knuuttila uses to try to establish this interpretation is taken primarily from Boethius's *Commentaries*. But using *Commentaries* evidence to support (P)'s presence in the *Consolation* is problematic in two ways.

First, there is good reason to think Boethius changed his mind about a lot of things in between writing the *Commentaries* and his *Consolation* (one very notable example being the change in his solution to the theological problem), if we assume that the view in the *Commentaries* are his own. Second, Boethius explicitly denies (P) in the *Commentaries*. The denial of (P) comes in Boethius's discussion of Diodorus, where Boethius construes Diodorus as "delimit[ing] the possible as that which either is or will be," (234.23-4). Having defined the notion of possibility he is going to attack Boethius continues with the following:

> But if all things happen necessarily, then, no doubt, one must come to Diodorus's incorrect view. For he thought that if someone were to die at sea, then he could not have met his death on land – something that neither Philo nor the Stoics say…For if anyone has died at sea, it was necessary that he be killed at sea, it was impossible that he meet his death on land – which is completely false, (235.5-9, 11-15).

Here "Boethius" appears to be attacking (P), since on the Diodorean view something is possible just in case it was, is or will be. But, in the example, since not dying at sea never was, is, or will be the case for the individual in the example, it is impossible that the individual does not die at sea. And this is what, depending on your view of the authenticity of the *Commentaries* text, Boethius or the ancient commentator he is reporting is rejecting. Further evidence against (P) is given in another passage a little bit later on:

> For it is not the case that if someone perishes in a shipwreck on the ocean, he would therefore have been going to be immortal on land if he had never gone to sea. And therefore contradictions are to be judged not on the basis of the outcome of things, events, or states of affairs but on the basis of the nature of the very (*ipsius/ipsos*) outcome of the propositions that enter them. For if all things are now prepared for me to go to Athens, it is obvious that I can go even if I do not go; and it is also undoubted by those who determine outcomes by right reason, on the basis of the nature of things, events, or states of affairs, that when I do go I could have not gone. It is not the case, therefore, that it is possible in such a way that it is necessary. Rather, although what is necessary is possible, there is another, extrinsic nature of possibility which is detached both from the impossible and from necessity, (235.25-236.4).

The key claim in this passage that denies (P) is Boethius's claim "that when I do go I could have not gone" because that claim makes the following sentence true:

       (NP) It is possible that q at t and it is possible that ~q at t.

(NP) is incompatible with (P) since on (P) if q is possible at t then q is true at t.  But it cannot be the case that both *q at t* is true and *~q at t* is true, which is what (NP) would yield if combined with (P).  Hence either (P) is true or (NP) is true.  And given the passage we should favor (NP).

    What is even more problematic, though, is that Knuuttila's interpretation of conditional necessity is at odds with the text of the *Consolation*, particularly with Boethius's use of the charioteer example.  As we will see shortly in discussing the theological problem, Boethius needs to maintain the contingency of the present in order to show that God's knowledge of the future, a knowledge that is based on the present perspective rather than being forward-looking, is compatible with contingency in the future.  The charioteer example is, in part, used to demonstrate this contingency by showing that the very fact that I observe a charioteer's activity doesn't make his activity necessary, even though the charioteer's activity comprises a present event.  On Knuuttila's interpretation of conditional necessity, however, such an event is necessary since the statement that describes it must either be temporally definite or be a token of an indefinite statement (or utterance) type, if it is to capture the event as present.  The third possibility, representing the event by a temporally indefinite utterance type, results in a loss of reference to any particular event in isolation from others; that is, such utterance types can only refer to event types, so it is not an option.  But since, on Knuuttila's own admission, both temporally definite statement types or tokens and temporally indefinite statement tokens are necessary, the statement about the charioteer is also necessary, contrary to what Boethius himself says.  So Knuuttila's interpretation of Boethian modal notions is inconsistent not only with the *Commentaries* but also with the *Consolation*.

## The M-K Thesis

I have shown that the atemporal view of modalities and the scope distinction strategy fares better as an interpretation of Boethius than Knuuttila's alternative, however another influential interpretation could be given that depends on temporalized modalities. Although this view has not appeared in print as an interpretation of Boethius, both Scott MacDonald and Dan Kaufmann have indicated that an interpretation based on viewing the necessity operator as an operator expressing necessity *per accidens* (or accidental necessity) might capture Boethius's own modal views and best explain the discussion in the *Consolation*. The MacDonald-Kaufmann or M-K thesis (i.e. the thesis that interprets 'necessity' in the fatalist's argument as necessity *per accidens*) would interpret the fatalist's argument as follows:

1. If some future proposition p is true at t, then at any time t' (such that t' is later that t), p is necessary *per accidens*.
2. p is true at t.
3. Therefore, p is necessary *per accidens* at t'.

Here the account of necessity *per accidens* appears to be something like what follows:

p is necessary *per accidens* if and only if:

(i) p is true at t and
(ii) *also* p could not have been false at t.

The general idea behind this interpretation is that once a proposition is true, at a particular time, the state of affairs it describes is fixed, since the proposition's truth-value could not be otherwise. But if a state of affairs is fixed then no agent has the ability to prevent that state of affairs from coming about. And since being able to prevent something from coming about is a necessary condition on having power over it, it follows that if propositions are true, at a particular time, then the states of affairs they describe are out of our power.

The M-K thesis, as presently defined, looks little different than the theory of necessity offered by Knuuttila, for on both Knuuttila's and the M-K theorist's conception of necessity, what determines necessity is truth. That is, both theorist's agree that once a proposition (or, in Knuuttila's case, a statement making utterance token or a temporally definite statement making utterance type) receives the truth-value 'T' it cannot lose that particular truth-value nor could it,

11

from that moment, have taken on another truth-value. So even though both theorists adopt different language in supplying their definitions of necessity, both accounts appear the same. But then why treat the M-K theorist's interpretation separate from Knuuttila's interpretation?

The difference comes not on the side of the account of necessity but on that of possibility. For in spite of agreeing with Knuuttila that statement-making utterance tokens or types about the past and present are necessary in a way incompatible with simultaneous synchronic alternatives, the M-K theorist need not and does not claim that these alternatives are also precluded from statement-making utterance types or tokens about the future. Instead the M-K theorist regards many claims about the future, i.e. those claims we call contingent, as being able to be satisfied or dissatisfied until the event or state of affairs they describe occurs or obtains. So although Knuuttila and the M-K theorist adopt accounts of necessity that appear to be the very same account expressed in different language, their divergence on how to treat possibility marks a significant difference in the two positions and warrants separate examination, particularly since the primary focus of my dispute with Knuuttila was on his Diodorean view of possibility.

The M-K thesis has several advantages to it. First, it might be seen as superior to Knuuttila's interpretation as it ascribes a more plausible modal theory to Boethius than Knuuttila's statistical model, without abandoning the claim that what makes the fatalist's argument so troubling is that necessity is incompatible with simultaneous synchronic possibilities, or 'the ability to do otherwise'. Second, it may be seen to be superior to my own view, as it represents the fatalist as having a problem worth worrying about and not just a confusion that we need to guide the fatalist through. In particular, the M-K thesis would make the fatalist's worry in the *Consolation* a problem that not only historical figures seemed to be worried about (e.g., William Ockham), but one that also forms a significant part of the contemporary debate about free-will and moral responsibility.[12]

But despite these apparent advantages the M-K thesis fails as an interpretation of Boethius in the *Consolation*.[13] First of all, even if we granted that the fatalist's argument should be

represented in terms of necessity *per accidens* we are left without a solution to the fatalist's worry and hence the logical problem. Recall that the centerpiece of the Boethian solution to the logical problem is showing that the fatalist's inference from truth to necessity in fact relies on a conception of necessity that blocks this inference, i.e. conditional necessity. But I can see no plausible way of making sense of conditional necessity along the lines of the M-K thesis that would enable Boethius to solve the problem. The scope distinction strategy, for example, is not available to the proponent of the M-K thesis, since the initial problem would remain, i.e. 1 and 2 would continue to entail 3 even on the wide scope interpretation of the modal operator. So we would need to look to another strategy: that is, to deny that any future contingent proposition is true before the state of affairs it describes obtains. To the detriment of the M-K thesis there is no evidence in the *Consolation* that indicates that Boethius thinks this is the proper solution to the logical problem. Hence, if those holding the M-K thesis wish to maintain their interpretation, they would seem to need to deny that a discussion of the logical problem ever arises. But, as I have argued elsewhere that does not look to be a very promising line.[14]

An equally troubling concern facing the proponent of the M-K thesis is the fact that Boethius seems to deny that necessity *per accidens* applies to his discussion of the logical problem. In V. pr. 4.41-56, Boethius denies the necessity of the present in the line: "Therefore things which, while they are happening, lack any necessity of being so, these same things, before they happen, are future without necessity." In other words, Boethius is claiming that although a proposition about the present (or future) is true at t, it fails to be the case that those propositions are necessary *per accidens* since condition (ii) on accidental necessity is left unsatisfied.[15] If so then we have compelling evidence that the M-K thesis is false.

Perhaps the most damaging argument against the M-K thesis is one that applies equally to Knuuttila's interpretation and any other interpretation of the *Consolation* that interprets Boethian modalities as temporalized. When we look at Boethius's solution to the logical problem in the *Consolation* we find not only that it occurs in the context of discussing the theological problem

but also that the very solution to the logical problem depends upon the solution to the theological problem. As we will see the solution to both problems essentially depends on the scope distinction strategy – a strategy which requires atemporal modalities to have any reasonable chance of success. But the solution to the theological problem cannot be one that involves essential reference to time. Since Boethius's solution to the theological problem is based on God's existing outside of time, appealing to temporal modalities to show how that problem is solved would be strikingly odd. And from what we have seen so far we have no good reason for believing Boethius would treat the modalities in the logical problem any differently than those in the theological problem i.e. the atemporal modalities.[16]

Once the atemporal interpretation of Boethian modalities has been accepted there is still the issue of how to unpack these modal concepts, and this is a much more difficult task. Owing to lack of evidence in the *Consolation* about what Boethius specifically had in mind about necessity, we can only speculate what the concept might look like. I am inclined to believe that in framing his modal notions Boethius not only included the broadly logical truths of mathematics, definition and logic but also wanted to extend these notions to anything that is consistent or inconsistent with God's existence. If this is correct then a tentative account of Boethian modalities in the *Consolation* might be expressed as follows:

> p is necessarily true if and only if p is true and all worlds in which God exists are worlds in which p is true.

> p is possibly true if and only if either there is some world in which God exists and p is true.

There are two things to note about the definitions of Boethian modalities offered here. First, Boethius himself was not familiar with the notion of possible worlds. Nevertheless, in invoking possible worlds I am not ascribing any kind of ontological commitment on Boethius's part to possible worlds, but merely using possible worlds to represent his view. So long as there is sense in reducing possible worlds to hypothetical cases, which may be examined through the faculties of introspection, imagination, etc. then possible worlds can be used legitimately in expressing

14

Boethius's thought.[17]  Second, this account needs further development, if the argument between competing interpretative options is to be settled conclusively.  Nevertheless, given the limitations of my present project I cannot go into the necessary detail to flesh these concepts out.  Even so, the tentative account provided here is sufficient, I think, for showing that my interpretation is superior to its rivals, so that my not providing a precise account of Boethian atemporal modalities is not a defect.  What is more important to the defense of my interpretation is the discussion of Boethius's solution to the theological problem in the *Consolation* and how it employs the same general strategy and concomitant modalities that the logical problem uses.  To this discussion we shall now turn.

### *Boethius and the Theological Problem*

The theological problem marks another challenge to human free-will by introducing the foreknowledge God is supposed to have of all events. Since orthodox theologians hold that God knows all events, including future ones, many claim that those events must come about of necessity. From these assumptions the fatalist concludes that God's foreknowledge eliminates human free-will, since the events God knows come about of necessity. As in the logical problem, Boethius's response is to identify and exploit the ambiguity of the modal operator in the fatalist's argument. For 'coming about of necessity' can be interpreted in one of two ways: the necessity operator in the argument can either be read as having broad scope (conditional or hypothetical necessity) or as having narrow scope (necessity *simpliciter*). This allows Boethius to adopt the strategy we saw earlier in the logical problem, i.e., to thrust the fatalist into a dilemma. So we get the following two arguments:

> [C] 4. If God foreknows some future contingent proposition p, then *necessarily* p.
> 5. God foreknows some future contingent proposition p.
> 6. Therefore, *necessarily* p.

> or

> [D] 4'. *Necessarily* (if God foreknows some future contingent proposition p, then p).
> 5'. God foreknows some future contingent proposition p.
> 6'. Therefore, *necessarily* p.

Options [C] and [D] parallel [A] and [B] of the logical problem, making Boethius's general response to the theological problem a familiar one. Boethius argues that 4 of [C] is false, so that [C] is an unsound argument. He rejects 4 because he thinks that God's knowledge of events, just like the knowledge of any other epistemic agent, fails to make the events themselves necessary. To support this claim Boethius again uses the example of the chariot driver. Suppose I veridically observe a charioteer driving a chariot. As I am watching him, nothing of significant modal import follows from my observation of his activity. Given that my observations of the chariot driver are

veridical, and supposing I have adequate justification for a belief about my observations, we can say I have knowledge about the activity of the charioteer. But the fact that I have this knowledge about the chariot driver's activity does not make his activity necessary. So although I know that p it does not follow that necessarily p.

While the example seems to work nicely to illustrate that human knowledge based on veridical perception does not entail that what is known is necessary, one may have doubts that this example could be useful in the case of divine foreknowledge. Nevertheless, Boethius thinks that this example can be extended to God's knowledge and so can be used to refute 4 of [C].

The extension is accomplished in two moves. First, Boethius holds that God exists outside of time. By holding that God exists atemporally Boethius is able to claim that God's knowledge can not properly be said to be a sufficient temporal condition for events or states of affairs. This is important because it diffuses problems beset by *fore*knowledge, where foreknowledge involves a temporal relation between an epistemic agent and an event, thing or state of affairs, by denying that God has such knowledge. Instead, and this is the second move, God's epistemic perspective is analogous to the perspective of a human observing an event – with one significant exception. In addition to grasping any and all events as if they were presently happening God also grasps them all at once (V. pr. 6.25-31, 59-76). But, just as in the case of the charioteer example, knowledge obtained from the epistemic perspective of the present does not entail anything about that event's modal status, even if that knowledge is infallible. So, Boethius believes that God's knowledge that p does not entail necessarily p and [C] fails to saddle the theist with incompatibilism.

As in his treatment of [B], Boethius accepts both premises in [D] and rejects the inference. 4' is true since knowledge entails truth, while 5' is a tenet of orthodox theology (assuming p's truth). So the problem is with the inference for, as we have shown in the case of [B] the inference used there, which is the same inference used in [D], is invalid. Hence, [D] fails to refute the compatibility of divine foreknowledge and human freedom.

The interpretation I have offered here of Boethius's solution to the theological problem is a common view in the philosophical literature.[18] Nevertheless there are some issues which it will be important to address, since while I agree with those who view Boethius as employing a scope distinction strategy to solve the theological problem, I disagree about the nature of the problem.

### The M-K Thesis Revisited

It is important to see that Boethius's response to the theological fatalist's argument in [C] commits him to framing the problem and response to it in terms of atemporal modalities. That is, if we are to make sense of the problem at all, according to Boethius, we must understand that God is outside of time, so that we can even make a claim about the relationship between God's knowledge and future states of affairs. Failing to understand the problem in these terms would involve making a large theological mistake.

But this claim is not without controversy. Certainly theologians and philosophers can and do worry about the possibility that God exists in time and whether that claim is consistent with human freedom. In fact, an objector might claim that while Boethius adopts the doctrine of divine timelessness, this doctrine is not a starting point in the discussion but a position he is moved to by the worry that God's foreknowing future propositions would make those propositions necessary *per accidens*. So in fact, the objector claims, Boethius recognizes that [C] is sound if necessity is viewed as necessity *per accidens* and we attribute foreknowledge to God. And if the objector is correct, we have very good reason for re-evaluating whether the M-K thesis is not the correct interpretation about the Boethian modalities after all.

One concern we may have with the objection is that it assumes that Boethius was worried that one of God's temporal properties would destroy human freedom: in particular, that if it is true of the past that God foreknew that p then p is out of our power. But this is not a problem Boethius seriously considers. Boethius, like most orthodox medieval Christian following him, holds that God is a simple being (V.4, V.6), where simplicity includes the idea that the being in question

possesses no real relational or non-relational properties. But without possessing real properties, no temporal property can be ascribed to God in such a way that it would generate the theological fatalist's problem as it is construed by the objector. If the problem were in fact presented, the appropriate Boethian response would be to say that ascribing properties to God can only be done analogically to aid our understanding about the divine attributes. So if it turns out that there are problems generated by these property ascriptions it is because philosophers fail to remember that those ascriptions are not intended to make any kind of ontological commitment, but to serve as an important heuristic device in theology. So it appears that [C] and [D] are problems that should be viewed as problems that are based on atemporal modalities at the outset, since it is those modalities that make no temporal commitments, i.e. ascribe no real temporal properties, to God and hence preserves divine simplicity.

Still one may legitimately wonder, if the modalities involved in the theological problem are indeed atemporal, as I claim, why does Boethius go to the trouble of emphasizing God's timelessness in solving the problem? It would seem that the primary motivation of placing God outside of time, and calling special attention to God's timelessness would be to show that God's knowledge of the future is not a past or present state of affairs, and hence cannot make the propositions He knows necessary *per accidens*. But if the starting point of the problem recognizes God's timelessness it seems we are left with no recognizable theological problem at all.

While it should be emphasized that the M-K theorist's understanding of the theological problem is a problem many philosophers worry about it is not the problem bothering Boethius. Boethius's concern instead is the following:

> For this is how you argue: if any things seem not to have certain and necessary occurrences, those things cannot be certainly foreknown as going to occur. Therefore of these things there is no foreknowledge, and if we think there is foreknowledge in these matters, there will be nothing which does not happen from necessity, (V. pr 5.41-46).

The text shows that the relevant worry is *not* the M-K theorist's worry that God's foreknowledge makes what is known necessary *per accidens* because God's act of foreknowing is a past or present state of affairs; instead Boethius is concerned with a general claim about knowledge that makes no special commitment to temporal modalities, namely that since knowledge requires that what is known is both certain and necessary, God's foreknowing the future makes the future certain and necessary.   We see further evidence of Boethius's real concern in the following quotation that restates the theological problem:

> But this, you say, is exactly what is in doubt, whether there can be any foreknowledge of those things which do not have necessary outcomes.  For these <foreknowledge and non-necessary outcomes> seem to be incompatible, and you think that if things are foreseen, necessity is a consequence, and if there is no necessity, they cannot be foreknown at all, and nothing can be grasped by knowledge except what is certain.  But if those things which are of uncertain outcome are foreseen as if they were certain, that is really the obscurity of opinion, not the truth of knowledge; for you believe thinking things to be other than as they are to be alien to the integrity of knowledge, (V., pr 4.62-71).

Here Boethius makes very clear that temporal modalities are incidental to the problem he is worried about.  In the last part of the quotation we see that it is knowledge of human action, whether temporal or atemporal, is what threatens human freedom.  For the claim here is that if anyone knows something then what is known is certain, and whatever is certain cannot be otherwise.  That is,

   (K) If S knows that p then p is certain, and if p is certain then p cannot be otherwise.

But if p cannot be otherwise, it appears that p is necessary.  Thus it appears that in this quotation the root of the problem is not foreknowledge particularly but the necessity produced by the certainty involved in *any kind of knowing*.  But once we admit that the problem turns on knowledge in general we can see that the modalities involved in the problem need not be temporal modalities, since (K) would appear to hold regardless of whether the epistemic agent (or the contents of one's beliefs) is temporal or atemporal.

Once we recognize that the theological problem makes no special commitment to temporal modalities in characterizing the relationship between God's knowledge of things and the objects of God's knowledge, we can see that there is room for an interpretation that views the theological problem as operating with atemporal modalities from the outset. But, of course, saying that there is room for an interpretation does not entitle us to conclude that the interpretation is correct.

As I argued previously, an essential feature of Boethian theology is the doctrine of divine simplicity, a doctrine which precludes any characterization of God as having temporal parts. But once divine simplicity is accepted there is no room for saying that any feature of God is subject to temporal modalities, including any supposed relation to temporal states of affairs. While this characterization of the problem may seem puzzling, particularly given that Boethius takes the trouble to emphasize in his solution that God's knowledge of the future is not strictly foreknowledge, further analysis shows that the atemporal interpretation is the correct interpretation.

In his solution, Boethius does not call attention to God's simplicity and his consequent lack of *fore*knowledge *to solve* the theological problem but rather *to remind us* that God's cognition of the past, present and future is very different from our own. In reminding us of this difference, and in indicating how God knows particulars, Boethius articulates the nature of the theological problem he is worried about and how to resolve it.

To show the difference between divine and human cognition, Boethius identifies three ways in which human beings know things: through the faculties of sense, imagination and reason (V. pr 4.82ff). Boethius claims that the highest mode of knowing things, for human beings, is the universal knowledge provided by the faculty of reason, for it is reason alone that enables humans to abstract the nature of particulars in such a way that what is judged is necessary. For example, when examining a particular human, reason enables me to abstract the universal nature rational animal from the human under consideration. Once I have abstracted the universal nature from the object of my cognition, I can express my resulting understanding through my affirmation of the

21

proposition that humans are rational animals. Like the proposition that humans are rational

animals, any proposition understood through the faculty of reasoning is a proposition that is both

certain and necessary.[19]

It is also noteworthy that rational knowledge (knowledge based on our reasoning faculties) is

the only kind of knowledge that gives humans certainty. The other two kinds of knowledge do

not, and it is this fact that seems to incline both Boethius and his audience to agree that rational

knowledge is a superior kind of knowing to sensory or imaginative knowing (although as we will

soon see, Boethius claims that it is not certainty that marks rational knowledge as special but

something else – a something else that produces our attitude of certainty.)

Yet there is an even higher kind of knowledge than rational knowledge, which is the

knowledge peculiar to God: intelligence or intellection, (V. pr. 4.96ff.; V. pr. 5.18ff).[20] One thing

that makes intellection superior to rational knowledge is that it gives God (certain) knowledge of

a state of affairs in its particularity without having the object of knowledge be the cause of God's

knowledge. This marks an important contrast from rational knowledge, for while rational

knowledge does not depend on the object of knowledge to be the cause of what is known, rational

knowledge is only limited to general or common facts. So the defect in rational cognition of

particulars is that it cannot involve any particular features of an individual or a context (even as

expressed in an eternal sentence like 'Life is discovered on Mars in 2015').

Now we can return to the theological problem. As we see expressed in (K), to be a truly

superior form of knowledge one's cognition of an object must be certain. This means that in

addition to claiming that the most superior kind of knowledge must (i) depend on no particular

features of the epistemic object, yet (ii) may include knowledge about the particular features of

the object known, it must also involve (iii) an attitude of certainty towards the object. But it is the

very idea of having certain cognition of what will happen in the future that the objector uses to

invoke (K) against the compatibility of foreknowledge and freedom. So how could Boethius use

God's intellective powers to save freedom from God's knowledge of the future?

To resolve the problem posed by (K) Boethius contends that (iii), while relevant to making

one's knowledge superior, does not entail that what is known has a certain outcome.  In showing

this Boethius's employs an important tenet of Neo-Platonic epistemology, whose source is

generally thought to be Iamblichus – hence called the Iamblichus Principle by several authors.[21]

> But if those things which are of uncertain outcome are foreseen as if they were
> certain, that is really the obscurity of opinion, not truth of knowledge; for you
> believe thinking things to be other than as they are to be alien to the integrity of
> knowledge.  The cause of this mistake is that each thinks that all that he knows is
> known simply by the power and nature of those things that are known.  Which is
> altogether otherwise:  for everything which is known is grasped not according to
> it own power but rather according to the capability of those who know it, (V, pr.
> 4 68-77).

The Principle is stated in the last lines of the text: that is, the character of the epistemic agent's

cognition is not dependent on the object of cognition but the powers of the agent herself.  This

allows a Neo-Platonist like Proclus to claim

> The gods know the generated ungeneratedly, the extended unextendedly, the
> divided undividedly, the temporal eternally, and the contingent necessarily.  For
> they generate all things by thinking alone, and what they generate they generate
> from the indivisible, eternal matterless forms therefore they must think of them in
> that manner.  We cannot suppose that in each case their knowing takes on the
> character of its object (*In Timaeum,* I. 352. 5-12, tr. Lloyd).

While Boethius may not agree in all details with Proclus's understanding of the Iamblichus

Principle, as it is applied to divine knowledge, the upshot for both authors is clear: God is able to

have certain knowledge about events without that knowledge changing the modal status of the

event (V. pr.5.50-56).  So if an event is contingent independently of God's knowledge of it,

God's certain knowledge of the event does *not* remove its contingency, since God's certain

knowledge need not entail certain outcomes.  Hence, (K) is false if intended to be a general

statement about God's knowledge of things and with that the contingency of the future is saved –

or at least for the moment.

Although Boethius can dispense with (K) by introducing the Iamblichus Principle there

remains a further worry which Boethius himself recognizes at the end of the *Consolation*.  The

worry is this: even if God timelessly knows future contingents the propositions expressing what God knows are necessary since they cannot not but occur. Here Boethius comments that this is a difficulty best handled by a theologian, but goes on to offer us an answer anyways, (V. pr. 6.100ff.). While he admits that the objector is right in saying that what God knows is in some sense inevitable, this sense of inevitability is unproblematic for the contingency of the future or human freedom. More specifically Boethius claims that when we view states of affairs independently from the divine cognition those states of affairs are either necessary or contingent depending on their natures, while when the divine cognition is added as a condition we see that those states of affairs are necessary.

The reader should pause when inevitability and necessity are invoked and then seemingly conceded to the objector. Boethius is not saying that necessity and freedom are compatible so that the claim that Necessarily Sam goes to Paris in 3007 is compatible with her freely going to Paris in 3007. Instead Boethius is reinvoking the scope distinction strategy. What he means is that we should concede the first two premises of argument form [D], i.e. 4' and 5'. But in conceding this we notice quite clearly that 6' cannot follow. So what determines whether states of affairs are necessary is not God's intellective knowledge of them but the states of affairs themselves instead.

This strategy is indicated in Boethius's final discussion of the walking human and the rising run. Earlier in his dialogue, Boethius recognized that ordinarily a walking human does so under no compulsion and hence walks freely, while the sun rises out of necessity, according to its necessary nature. Using this example, Boethius makes plain the idea that God's knowledge of the future has no effect on the modal status of what God knows, since the necessity involved in God's knowing that p is the conditional necessity involved in 4' of [D].

> Surely, as much as those things I put before you a moment ago, the rising sun and the walking man: while these things are happening, they cannot not happen, but of the two one, even before it happened, was bound to happen, while the other was not. So also, those things God possesses as present, beyond doubt will

happen, but of them the one kind is consequent upon the necessity of things, the other upon the power of those doing them. So therefore we were not wrong in saying that these, if related to the divine knowledge, are necessary, if considered in themselves, are free from the bonds of necessity, just as everything which lies open to the senses, if you relate it to the reason, is universal, if you look at it by itself, is singular, (V. 6.127-139).[22]

What we have shown, then, is that the M-K thesis does not offer an accurate understanding of the modalities or the problems involved in Boethius's discussion of the theological problem. The fact that the main problems raised by the objector rest on no commitment to temporal modalities, i.e. in an argument employing (K) as its central premise, or in the argument which appears after Boethius has conceded timelessness, shows that temporal modalities should not be applied to the *Consolation* text. What this shows is that interpreting the theological problem as an atemporal problem does no worse than the M-K theorist's suggestion, and does better job of isolating what Boethius's primary worry is.[23]

---

[1]  See Norman Kretzmann, "Boethius and the Truth about Tomorrow's Sea Battle" in *Ammonius On Aristotle's On Interpretation 9 with Boethius On Aristotle's On Interpretation 9*, ed. Richard Sorabji (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998): 24-52; and Mario Mignucci "Truth and Modality in Late Antiquity: Boethius on Future Contingent Propositions" in *Atti del Convegno Internazionale di Storia della Logica. Le Teorie della Modalità*, eds. G. Corsi, C. Mangione and M. Mugnai (Bologna: CLUEB, 1989): 47-78. These authors are only concerned with Boethius's response to the logical problem and with what is going on in the *Commentaries* text.

[2]  See James Shiel, "Boethius's *Commentaries* on Aristotle", *The Journal of Mediaeval and Renaissance Studies* 4 (1958), 217-244, and for a contrary view Sten Ebbesen "Boethius as an Aristotelean Commentator" in *Aristotle Transformed*, ed. Richard Sorabji (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 373-391. A revised edition of Shiel's article also appears in *Aristotle Transformed*, 349-372.

[3]  For accounts of the history of modality in medieval philosophy that emphasize temporal modalities see Simo Knuuttila, "Modal Logic," in *The Cambridge History of Later Medieval Philosophy*, ed. Norman Kretzmann, Anthony Kenny and Jan Pinborg (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982): 342-357; Calvin Normore, "Future Contingents," in Kretzmann, et al., 358-381; Knuuttila *Modalities in Medieval*

*Philosophy* (New York: Routledge, 1993); and Norman Kretzmann *William of Sherwood's Introduction to Logic* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1966).

[4] "There are two kinds of necessity, one simple, like 'it is necessary that all humans are mortal', and the other conditional, as in 'if someone is seen walking then that they are walking is necessary'. For whatever it is that one knows, it cannot be other than as it is known, but this condition[al necessity] by no means drags with it the simple kind [of necessity]. For the proper nature of a thing does not produce this necessity, but is [produced by] the addition of the condition; for instance, no necessity compels someone to move who walks willingly, although at the time when one is walking it is necessary to move." V. pr. 6.103-113, translation mine. *The Consolation of Philosophy*, Loeb Classical Library, (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), V. pr. 6.103-113, translation mine. Unless otherwise indicated all translations from the *Consolation* are S.J. Tester's, whose translations are found in the Loeb volume.

[5] See Knuuttila, *Modalities in Medieval Philosophy*, 45-62.

[6] "The whole distinction [between conditional and simple necessity] seems to be reduced to one between what is invariant *simpliciter* and what is invariant in a definite period of time," Knuuttila, *Modalities in Medieval Philosophy*, 54.

[7] This claim is true under the harmless assumption that that the tense of the verb 'to be' correctly indicates the temporal position of the event or state of affairs relative to the time of utterance, inscription, etc.

[8] The source of the strategy is in Jaakko Hintikka, *Time and Necessity: Studies in Aristotle's Theory of Modality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1973).

[9] It also shows why Boethius distinguishes between conditional necessity and necessity *simpliciter*. Since Knuuttila's Boethius believes that p is necessary just in case p is omnitemporally true, a statement that is necessary must be true at all times. From our examples it is clear that Boethius will claim that utterance types like (1) will be necessary while those like (2) won't be. It also turns out that simple statements like (2) that are temporally definite will also be necessary, for example: (3) A charioteer races past me at 12pm on July 12, 2004. Even though (3) isn't a conditional statement Knuuttila's Boethius believes (3) is conditionally necessary, rather than necessary *simpliciter*. The reason is that what makes something conditionally necessary, on this interpretation, is that the necessity in question is subject to some temporally definite condition. Divorced from that condition the sentence is contingent, as demonstrated in (2). Thus,

in making the distinction between conditional necessity and necessity *simpliciter* Knuuttila's Boethius must distinguish between statements whose utterance types are time-indexed and statements whose utterances types are not, to ensure that contingency is retained.

[10] Initially it may be unclear how tokens of temporally indefinite statement types are necessary, since if they are temporally indefinite, it would appear that they may not be omnitemporally true. However, we can show that these tokens are omnitemporally true, and hence necessary, if we allow the context of the token's utterance to nail down the reference of the (implicit) indexical terms contained in the sentence to a particular time. Once the reference of the (implicit) indexicals contained in the utterance token is fixed the token is omnitemporally true since it is truth-invariant. For Knuuttila's discussion of temporally indeterminate utterance tokens, see Knuuttilla, *Modalities in Medieval Philosophy*, 52.

[11] While his primary focus on Boethian modalities is the *Commentaries* Knuuttila extends the interpretation to the *Consolation*, albeit much more tentatively. See Knuuttila, *Modalities in Medieval Philosophy*, 60-1.

[12] One particularly influential "contemporary" article that adopts a version of the M-K thesis is Peter Van Inwagen's "The Incompatibility of Free Will and Determinism," *Philosophical Studies* 27 (1975): 185-99. The thesis also shows up in Van Inwagen's equally influential monograph *An Essay on Free Will* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983).

[13] Note that if I am right that Knuuttila and the M-K theorist share essentially the same account of necessity the criticisms offered against the M-K theorist's account of necessity will apply equally well to Knuuttila's account. This makes Knuuttila's interpretation doubly problematic as it not only ascribes the wrong account of possibility to Boethius, as I have already shown, but that it gets his account of necessity wrong as well.

[14] See chapter two of my "The Boethian Solution to the Problem of Future Contingents and its Unorthodox Rivals". Ph.D. diss., University of Nebraska, 2001.

[15] As stated this is not completely accurate. Boethius, like several other medievals, held that there was a range of present and future propositions that were necessary, e.g. 'the sun will rise tomorrow' and 'the sun is rising now' and both viewed by Boethius necessary. So for this limited range of propositions our

generalization does not hold. However, outside of this limited scope of propositions we can be confident in this claim.

[16] Even if we grant that the fatalist's arguments involve temporal modal operators, it would still remain the case that Boethius's solution to both the theological problem and the logical problem would be to show that the fatalist is making a mistake in using temporal modal operators in place of atemporal ones (even the M-K theorist would grant this, at least in the case of the solution to the theological problem). Once the problem is properly reformulated in atemporal terms we can see how Boethius uses the scope distinction to show that God's knowledge of future contingent propositions or the truth of future contingent propositions do not make the propositions necessary.

[17] For further reason for thinking that I am making no ontological commitments in using modal operators see footnote 18 on the bottom of page 19 in Saul Kripke's *Naming and Necessity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1980). Also, for the legitimacy of using contemporary philosophical devices like possible worlds to represent claims made by historical figures see Michael Frede, "Introduction: The Study of Ancient Philosophy," in *Essays in Ancient Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1987): ix-xxvii.

[18] See e.g. Richard Sorabji, *Necessity, Cause and Blame: Perspectives on Aristotle's Theory* (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., Ltd.: 1980), chapter seven, Brian Leftow, *Time and Eternity* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991), chapter eight and Linda Trinkaus Zagzebski, *The Dilemma of Freedom and Foreknowledge* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), chapter two.

[19] In saying what is known is necessary there is still an important ambiguity. Does Boethius mean to say that all humans are necessarily mortal or that necessarily all humans are mortal? For the case of what is known by human beings, I think Boethius does want us to offer both readings in characterizing universal statements. As discussed in the above, reason is able to make universal statements only on the basis of understanding the nature of a thing, a nature that is *necessary* to the thing. But since natures are necessary features of beings, it is correct to say that, for example, human beings are necessarily mortal (where the necessity operator is used in the narrow sense). However, it is also true to say that necessarily (in the wide sense) that human beings are mortal. So for statements affirmed by reason, those statements are necessary in both senses. As we will see later, this does not hold for God.

[20] With the addition of intelligence or intellection to the list of ways in which things are grasped, Boethius offers us a fairly standard Neo-Platonic analysis of epistemic powers, leaving out only the category of belief/judgment in his discussion. This omission is fairly harmless, since according to one author, all judgment amounts to is "matching the presentations <of perception> against concepts which the soul already possesses," p. 142 of A.C. Lloyd, *The Anatomy of NeoPlatonism* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990). In essence belief/judgment is just a naming function whose inputs are sensory presentations and whose outputs are (mental) names of those presentations. While reason appears to depend upon belief/judgment in order to form its propositions – and some Neo-Platonist's felt that sensation and imagination depended on it also – this does not appear to warrant a special discussion of the judging faculty since the "knowledge" offered is relatively trivial.

[21] See Lloyd, *The Anatomy of NeoPlatonism*, 154, and John Marenbon, *Boethius* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), chapter six. Iamblichus is credited in Ammonius's *Commentaries on De Interpretatione 9*, as being the first to propose the principle.

[22] There may be some puzzlement regarding the last portion of the text and how it supports the idea that divine knowledge is expressed by necessary conditionals rather than conditional statements with a necessary consequent. The confusion is due to Boethius's characterization of God's knowledge as necessary in the way that what is known by reason is necessary. In a footnote above I discussed the ambiguity present in Boethius's discussion of the necessity of universal claims, and how both a wide and narrow scope reading of a universal statement offered an equally plausible interpretation of what reason knows. However, this double reading cannot be given as an interpretation of what God knows given what Boethius has already claimed about intellection, God's peculiar way of knowing. With what is known by intellection, universal claims may only be represented using a wide scope reading of the necessity operator, i.e. representing a claim as a necessary conditional statement. So Boethius, in failing to disambiguate the senses of necessity present in his discussion of reason and universality, fails to notice that a damaging kind of necessity could be misapplied to God's knowledge with some justification by the objector. What he should have made explicit is that universal statements when expressed in terms of a wide scope reading of the necessity operator hold both for what is known by reason and what is known by God. Then it would be clear both why things can be considered necessary or inevitable, when known by God, and yet human

beings continue to possess freedom, since that necessity of inevitability would be a statement like that expressed in 4'of (D).

30